

HOON DRIVERS — COVERT CAMERAS

Statement

HON SALLY TALBOT (South West) [6.20 pm]: Sadly, it seems that sometimes the government's way of measuring the strength of community feeling about particular issues depends on members of Parliament bringing those issues to this place. No matter how loudly the community speaks out in the local areas that make up our electorates, unless a member of Parliament is prepared to stand in this place and talk about those issues, the government does not notice; it feels that it can turn a blind eye to those concerns. It is with that in mind that tonight I want to raise the issue of the safety of people on our roads, particularly the hoon activity that is the scourge of many of our suburbs. This problem is not isolated to my electorate in the south west or to the many communities that make up the south west. From talking to my colleagues and from reading the newspapers, my understanding is that it is certainly a statewide, if not a national, phenomenon. It is part of a more general problem to do with the very real and well-grounded fear that many people feel associated with using the roads. We know that congestion itself brings its own problems. Congestion is not just something that is experienced by those living in the metropolitan area; those of us who are based outside the metropolitan area also know that in some of our regional centres, congestion is a very real problem. It is to do with overuse of the roads. I guess as much as anything else, it is to do with a kind of growing impatience and a lack of tolerance that has been widely noted in our community and is the subject of very complicated debate. Obviously, it is a real challenge for policymakers.

Aside from all that, if we live in a suburb—generally, hooners are active in built-up areas—it is a genuinely disconcerting thing to experience. When moving around the parts of my electorate where I do most of my work, I have discovered that it is not just a matter of people speeding. That has been a problem ever since traffic was motorised. I always tell people the story about the grandfather of a friend of mine who apparently drove a car once and once only. He got in the car, drove down the main street, pulled back on the steering wheel and said “whoa”. When the car did not slow down, he slammed into the wall at the end of the street, got out, kicked it and never drove again. Ever since those days, irresponsible driving has been a problem. Now we seem to be in a different sort of era where people are almost held hostage in their homes at night because of the sound of screeching tyres and the general quite frightening behaviour that goes along with hooning. It is not just that people are frightened to go out and cross main roads where people are speeding or walk around their suburbs where people are hooning; they are frightened inside their houses because on a regular basis we hear about out-of-control vehicles slamming into houses. In one case that I was reading about just the other day, the vehicle came to rest only a metre away from the bedroom where small children were sleeping.

When I look at the kind of comments that people make to me by way of phone calls, letters and emails to my electorate office, it is obvious that we have a problem that is causing very real and growing concern in the community. I will give honourable members a flavour of this, although I know that members on both sides of the house are aware of these problems. I am sure it is not just Labor offices that are receiving these kinds of comments on a regular basis. When asked what the most important issues are to local people in Halls Head, I got the answer, “Joy riders and hooners at night driving in our street.” Another comment received from someone in Halls Head when asked what one thing they would do to improve their community was, “Control hoon driving.” When asked what they liked least about living in the community, someone in Erskine said, “Speeding traffic on Old Coast Road.” Someone else in Erskine said, “Hooners everywhere.” Someone from Dawesville said, “Hooners on Old Coast Road near Dawesville Caravan Park.” This is just a very abbreviated account that I found after a couple of minutes' delving into our databases to see what sorts of things people were saying. I know that it is not just Labor members who are hearing these comments.

A little under six months ago I thought that the government was finally going to take action. Members will notice that the comments I just read out are all from people living in the electorate of Dawesville. Hon Kim Hames, the Deputy Premier, wrote to a number of people in his electorate asking them to help stop hooners in their area. Clearly, Hon Kim Hames is hearing the same sort of comments that I am hearing from that electorate. He wrote to people giving them what appeared to be at the time—this is the end of September, beginning of October last year—the news that the government was spending \$170 000 over four years for the purchase of specialised covert hoon cameras. He went on to explain that these cameras will help police to capture those motorists who drive recklessly and endanger the lives of local residents. He said that the cameras have the ability to be hidden in known hoon hotspots and will record those vehicles in the act. People want an answer to this problem. They are being subject to an experience that I acknowledge would be truly terrifying, night after night. They want a response from the police—from the government. They want a better response than the one they are getting now, which is basically nothing. The police do not have the time or the resources to come out and speak to everybody who reports this kind of behaviour on the streets. Hon Kim Hames is saying to his constituents that they have to fix this problem because they have to report this behaviour. He sent everybody

a card saying “Stop hoons in your area”. It says that they have to report the behaviour, they have to note the date and time, the location, the suburb et cetera. Finally, we thought that action was going to be taken. It is quite clear that the government knows about this problem.

Yesterday, nearly six months later, I asked what had been done. I cannot say I am surprised by this because we have already witnessed this pattern of behaviour by the government. It goes out there and makes a lot of noise, says it is going to do stuff, talks about \$170 000, and talks about things such as hotspots, which will get everybody believing that it will do something, and then the minister goes back, closes the door of his big white car, drives back to his office in the city, shuts the door and does not do anything. Yesterday I asked the Minister for Police about this \$170 000 that the government was spending on these covert hoon cameras. The answer was that they have not been bought. The government does not have any cameras. The government has been in office since September 2008. This problem has been going on for years and we have no cameras. The police have identified the need for cameras. What does that mean? Let us strip away the *Yes Minister* language. It means that the police know what they want but the government has not given it to them. Sadly, the trick has been played on the electors of Dawesville because the rate of reporting has not gone up. There is no way that any area of Dawesville will be identified as a hoon hotspot because the minister told us yesterday that the total number of reports in the last six months is only 14. The total number of reports in January was five; in December, it was one; in November, it was five; in October, it was two; and in September, it was one, to go backwards through time. This is just talk. This is just an attempt to make the problem go away without spending one cent on fixing it, without doing a single thing to make sure that those complaints are noted and acted on. It is just mirrors and black velvet.